
THE SHED Press Release

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THE SHED PRESENTS THE US PREMIERE OF ARINZÉ KENE'S GENRE-DEFYING PLAY, *MISTY*

Directed by Omar Elerian
Music Composed by Arinzé Kene, Adrian McLeod, and Shiloh Coke

At The Shed's Griffin Theater, March 3 – April 2, 2023

"A punch of superbly fierce defiance" — *Time Out London*

"Arinzé Kene writes and performs explosively [...] the production never stops crackling." — *The Guardian*

"Arinzé Kene is blazingly charismatic." — *Evening Standard*



Arinzé Kene, *Misty*, Bush Theatre, London UK, March 15, 2018. Photo: Helen Murray.

NEW YORK, NY, December 15, 2022 — The Shed's **Alex Poots**, Artistic Director and CEO, and **Madani Younis**, Chief Executive Producer, today announced the US premiere of *Misty*, a genre-defying play written by and starring Olivier Award-nominee **Arinzé Kene** (West End productions of *Get Up*, *Stand Up! The Bob Marley Musical*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Girl from the North Country*, *The Lion King*, *One Night in Miami*) in his US stage debut and directed by **Omar Elerian** (*NASSIM*, *Two Palestinians Go Dogging*, *The Chairs*). Preview performances for the four-week run begin March 3, 2023; the production opens on March 9 with performances through April 2 in The Shed's intimate Griffin Theater.

Fusing live music, spoken word, and absurdist comedy, *Misty* is an exhilarating journey through a city in flux, transporting audiences to the streets of gentrifying London in an exploration of the pressures and expectations that come with being an artist in our time. In a performance that is part poem, part concert, part confession, Kene self-consciously wrestles with cultural representation and identity politics as they pertain to a new play he has been commissioned to write. This riveting production is accompanied by a pulsating original score composed by Kene, Adrian McLeod, and Shiloh Coke and performed by a live band featuring co-musical directors Liam Godwin (keys/synth) and Nadine Lee (drums/bass).

When it premiered at London's Bush Theatre, *Misty* was hailed as "one of the great theater success stories of 2018" (*The Guardian*, UK) and "a tour de force by a force of nature" (*The Upcoming*) before it transferred to the West End—making Kene only the second Black British playwright to have a play produced in the West End—and garnered 2019 Olivier Award nominations for Best New Play and Best Actor.

Arinzé Kene said, "*Misty* at its heart is a play about gentrification—how it changes people's lives and how it ruins people's lives. I came to Hackney in East London in the early '90s when I moved from Nigeria. I've seen it change over the years. I wanted to tell that story from the point of view of the people who have grown up there and the people who have been displaced as well. On the stage is the London you see when you walk down the street. It's the London that has many different skin complexions, languages, and accents. The London where you hear Grime music playing out of that car, then Southside out of that car, and you walk into the shop and you're listening to Bebop. That's the London in *Misty*."

"When I first saw *Misty*, I knew I was witnessing one of those very rare shows that is an original, one that advances the art form—a true pathbreaker. It's also deadpan funny," said Alex Poots, Artistic Director and CEO of The Shed. "This play's inventive discourse on city-making unravels the complexities of class experiences in London that resonate deeply with any global city."

"Arinzé Kene's *Misty* is one of the most significant theatrical shows to debut in London in recent years," said Madani Younis, Chief Executive Producer of The Shed. "Arinzé's long list of accolades—from multiple Olivier Award nominations to being only the second Black British playwright to open a show in the West End—attest to his crucial place in contemporary British theater. *Misty* sits at the intersection of the joy, despair, and hope familiar to anyone living in a global city today, and it speaks to anyone interested in thinking about stories in new ways. When it opened in the West End, I took note of the audience around me and thought for the first time, finally the West End looks like London."

"*Misty* is genuinely one of the most subversive pieces of art I have ever been part of. But its subversion happens tongue in cheek, taking the audience on a rambling odyssey through the concrete-laden streets of East London as well as into the turbulent mind of a writer trying to find his way in—or out—of the story he's trying to write," said Omar Elerian. "I never know how to describe the show to someone

who hasn't seen it. To some it's a musical, to others it's an epic poem, a piece of performance art, a searing social commentary, a really funny guy playing with balloons, an act of defiance by an artist who refuses to be put into a box. It's a piece of art that asks to have a conversation with its audience about what matters most to anyone who has ever been in a position to create. I really look forward to New York audiences taking a deep dive into Arinzé's meta-fractured-post-dramatic-epic bus ride through what it means to be an artist in a world full of competing truths and sophisticated lies."

The creative team includes Rajha Shakiry (set/costume design), Jackie Shemesh (lighting design), Elena Peña (sound design), and Daniel Denton (video design).

Misty was originally commissioned and produced by the Bush Theatre in London, with Madani Younis, Executive Producer, and had its world premiere on March 21, 2018. *Misty* transferred to the West End for a limited run presented by Trafalgar Theatre Productions, Jonathan Church Productions, Eilene Davidson, and Audible, September 8 – November 17, 2018.

Ticketing and General Information

Tickets for *Misty* go on sale on December 20 (Shed member presale begins on December 16). For additional information, tickets, and Covid-19 safety guidelines, visit TheShed.org.

About The Artists

Arinzé Kene MBE is an award-winning writer and performer, who has most recently been seen as Bob Marley in the smash-hit West End musical *Get Up Stand Up!*, for which he was nominated for an Olivier Award. Prior to this, Arinzé's one-man play *Misty* ran at the Bush Theatre to critical acclaim before transferring to the West End and garnering two Olivier Award nominations. Other stage roles include Sam Cooke in *One Night in Miami* (Donmar Warehouse), *Girl From the North Country* (Old Vic Theatre), and *Death of a Salesman* (Young Vic Theatre).

Key screen credits include Julia Hart's *I'm Your Woman* (Amazon), Dominic Savage's BAFTA-nominated *I Am...* anthology series (Channel 4), *Been So Long* opposite Michaela Coel (Netflix), *Flack* (PopTV), *Our Girl* (BBC One), and Caitlin Moran's *How to Build a Girl*. For his lead role in *The Pass*, he was nominated for the 2016 BIFA's Best Supporting Actor and won the 2016 Evening Standard Film Awards' Best Supporting Actor.

Omar Elerian is a freelance director, dramaturg, and theater-maker. Italian of Palestinian descent, Elerian trained in Italy and then graduated from Lecoq International Theatre School in Paris in 2005. He was the resident associate director at London's Bush Theatre from 2012 to 2019 where he commissioned and directed some of the theater's most successful shows.

His directing credits include the smash-hit *Misty* by Arinzé Kene (Bush Theatre and West End), *NASSIM* by Nassim Soleimanpour (Bush Theatre, Traverse Theatre, and world tour), *Going Through* by Estelle Savasta, and *Islands* by Caroline Horton. Other credits include the Olivier Award-nominated show *You're Not Like the Other Girls* Chrissy by Caroline Horton and the acclaimed site-specific show *The Mill: City of Dreams*, co-created with Madani Younis for Freedom Studios. His most recent directing credits include *The Return of Danton* by Syrian playwright Mudar Alhaggi, which premiered at Munich Kammerspiele in Germany; *The Chairs* by Eugene Ionesco, starring Kathryn Hunter and Marcello Magni at the Almeida Theatre in London; and the Theatre Uncut Political Theatre Award-winning play *Two Palestinians Go Dogging* by Sami Ibrahim at the Royal Court.

Daniel Denton (video design) is a London-based visual artist and video designer. With a background in illustration and experimental film, he has created live visuals across theater, opera, dance, fashion, broadcast, and installation, and his video design work has garnered him multiple award nominations. Recent credits include *Kinky Boots* (New Wolsey/Queen's Theatre Hornchurch); *Happy Meal* (Traverse/Australian Tour/Brixton House); *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (Leeds Playhouse/HOME Manchester); *The Bone Sparrow* (York Theatre Royal/UK tour); *iGirl* and *On Raftery's Hill* (Abbey Theatre); *For The Grace of You Go I* (Theatre Clwyd); *Whitewash* (Soho Theatre); *Flashdance* (UK tour/South Korean Tour); *Sketching* (Wilton's Music Hall); *Ready or Not* (Arcola Theatre/UK tour); and *Misty* (Bush Theatre/Trafalgar Studios).

Nominations include a WhatsOnStage Award for Best Video Design (*Misty*); a Broadway World UK Award for Best Video Design (*Happy Meal*); an Off West End Award for Best Video Design (*Misty*, *Sketching*); and a Theatre and Technology Award for Creative Innovation in Video (*Ready or Not*).

Elena Peña's (sound design) recent theater credits include *Baghdaddy*, *Two Palestinians Go Dogging*, *seven methods of killing kylie jenner*, *Maryland*, *Living Newspaper* (Royal Court), and *Silence* (Donmar/Tara Theatre); *The Chairs* (Almeida Theatre); *seven methods of killing kylie jenner* (Riksteatern, Sweden); *The Darkest Part of The Night*, *Reasons (You Shouldn't Love Me)*, *Snowflake*, *The Kilburn Passion*, and *Arabian Nights* (Kiln Theatre); *Nora: A Doll's House*, *Macbeth*, and *Mountains* (Royal Exchange); *Trouble In Mind* (National Theatre); *Rockets And Blue Lights*, receiving an Offie/On Comm Award for Best Audio Production 2021 (National Theatre and Royal Exchange); and *Misty* (Bush Theatre and the West End). Peña is an associate artist at Inspector Sands.

Jackie Shemesh's (lighting design) recent theater credits include *The Seagull* (Jamie Lloyd Productions, the West End); *Two Palestinians Go Dogging* (Royal Court); *The Chairs* (Almeida Theatre) and *Mary Stuart* (Almeida Theatre and the West End); *Uncle Vanya* (Almeida Theatre); *White Noise* (Bridge Theatre); *Changing Destiny*, *In the Penal Colony*, *Man*, and *Oh My Sweet Land* (Young Vic); *The Return of Danton* (Mulheim Theatre); *Death of England: Delroy*, *Death of*

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England, and *Hansard* (National Theatre); and *Misty* (Bush Theatre and the West End).

Rajha Shakiry's (set and costume design) recent theater credits include *The Father and the Assassin*, *Trouble in Mind*, and *Master Harold the Boys* (National Theatre); *Nine Night* (National Theatre and the West End); *The Mountaintop* (Young Vic/UK tour/Royal Exchange, Manchester); *Two Palestinians Go Dogging* and *seven methods of killing kylie jenner* (Royal Court); *Return of Danton* (Collective Ma'louba, Germany); *Autoreverse* (BAC); *Richard II* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Misty* (Bush Theatre and the West End); *Going Through* (Bush Theatre), and *The Dark* (Fuel). Shakiry's work was exhibited at the V&A *Make/Believe* exhibition and in the Prague Quadrennial's *UK Staging Places* exhibition.

Support

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The creation of new work at The Shed is generously supported by the Lizzie and Jonathan Tisch Commissioning Fund and the Shed Commissioners.

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About The Shed

The Shed is a new cultural institution of and for the 21st century. We produce and welcome innovative art and ideas, across all forms of creativity, to build a shared understanding of our rapidly changing world and a more equitable society. In our highly adaptable building on Manhattan's west side, The Shed brings together established and emerging artists to create new work in fields ranging from pop to classical music, painting to digital media, theater to literature, and sculpture to dance. We seek opportunities to collaborate with cultural peers and community organizations, work with like-minded partners, and provide unique spaces for private events. As an independent nonprofit that values invention, equity, and generosity, we are committed to advancing art forms, addressing the urgent issues of our time, and making our work impactful, sustainable, and relevant to the local community, the cultural sector, New York City, and beyond.